



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NOVEMBER 2, 2006

CONTACT:
MICHELLE MOWERY JOHNSON
615-313-4707 (OFFICE)

CHILD CARE AGENCIES GEAR UP FOR TRANSPORTATION CHANGE *PROVIDERS ACROSS THE STATE MUST STOP USING LARGE VANS OR FACE PENALTIES*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. —The days of using 15-passenger vans to transport children are ending for licensed child care providers across Tennessee. Rules approved by the General Assembly will take effect in exactly two months. Providers who rely on 15-passenger vans to transport children must stop using them by January 1, 2007. They will be allowed to use approved vehicles, which include large and small school buses, multifunction school activity buses (MFSAB) or regular passenger cars, such as mini-vans and SUV's for transporting children.

The movement to ban the vans began with the deadly Tippy Toes Learning Academy crash in Memphis on April 4, 2002. Four children and the driver were killed when the 15-passenger van crashed into an interstate bridge abutment.

In mid-April 2002, a special "Child Care Transportation Committee" was convened to study child care transportation. Based on extensive studies by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Committee found that crash tests on 15-passenger vans – which were originally designed to carry cargo but not people –are unusually susceptible to a "rollover" in the event of a crash, which greatly increases the likelihood of passengers being seriously injured or killed in an accident. School buses, on the other hand, are far less likely to cause serious injury or death in the event of a crash.

In June 2002, the Committee recommended several changes to the Department of Human Services' licensing rules, including prohibiting child care agencies from using the 15-passenger vans effective January 2005. DHS extended the implementation date to January 2007 to allow providers to plan for the purchase or lease of the more costly buses.

"This is not about punishing providers. It's about keeping kids safe," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "Transportation has always been a high-risk venture, but what is even riskier is allowing the continued use of 15-passenger vans. School systems are not allowed to purchase and use these types of vehicles for children in Kindergarten through 12th grade, so it certainly doesn't make sense to transport even smaller children in these vans."

Most agencies have used the past several years to prepare for this change. Across the state, hundreds of agencies have already complied with the new rules, but there are some that have not yet made the switch. DHS will begin enforcing the new rules the first of the year, and agencies that fail to follow them will be sanctioned. Penalties would include suspension of transportation or fines.

Human Services licenses 3,500 child care agencies in Tennessee, and nearly 23 percent of these offer transportation. The majority of transportation takes place in Shelby County, with nearly 300 providers offering this service. Knox County has the second highest transportation concentration in the state, followed by Davidson, Montgomery, Sumner and Hamilton Counties.

Citizens who witness transportation or other child care violations are urged to call the Child Care Complaint Hotline at 1-800-462-8261. This number is posted on every licensed child care vehicle. For more information on child care licensing, visit: http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/cc_main.htm

###

CITIZENS PLAZA, 15TH FLOOR
400 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37248
615.313.4700